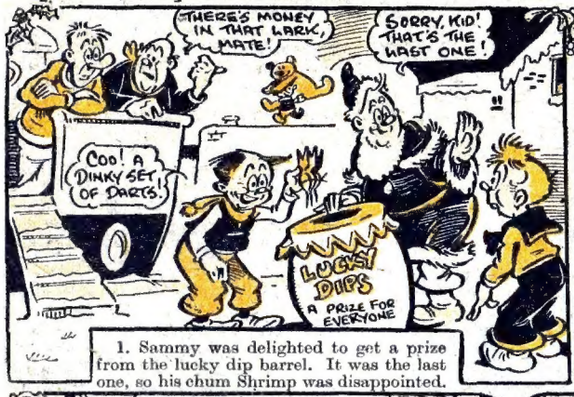
COMIC CUTS XMAS FUN FARE! KING of COMICS 2d

COMIC CUTS

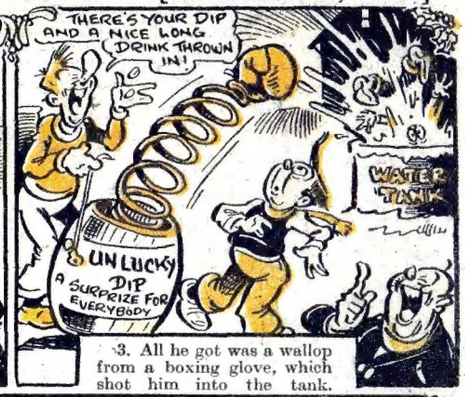
AND XMAS LARKS

[No. 2,757.] SAMMY AND THE SHRIMP GIVE THE MATES A CHILLY RECEPTION! [DECEMBER 30, 1944.]

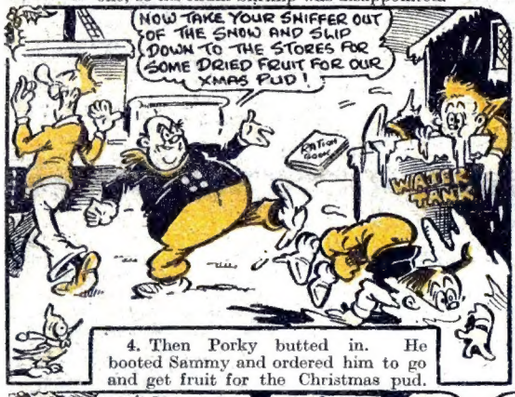


1. Sammy was delighted to get a prize from the lucky dip barrel. It was the last one, so his chum Shrimp was disappointed.

2. But Salty produced a barrel of his own, and let Shrimp try his luck.



3. All he got was a wallop from a boxing glove, which shot him into the tank.

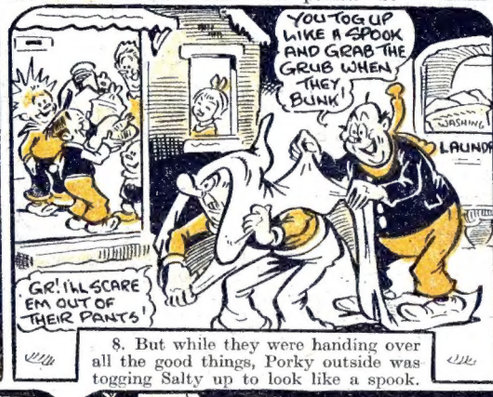


4. Then Porky butted in. He booted Sammy and ordered him to go and get fruit for the Christmas pud.

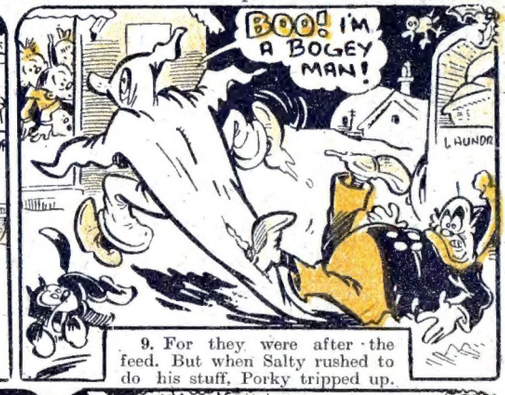
5. Sammy toddled off with his order. But the shopkeeper asked about the points. So—

6. As Sammy hadn't got any, he was given a slap and told to scram. In came Shrimp, all over icicles.

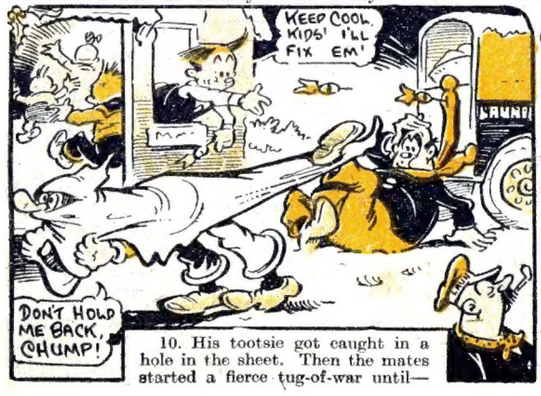
7. They spiked the grub display, and then went to make a call on Sammy's Aunt Emily.



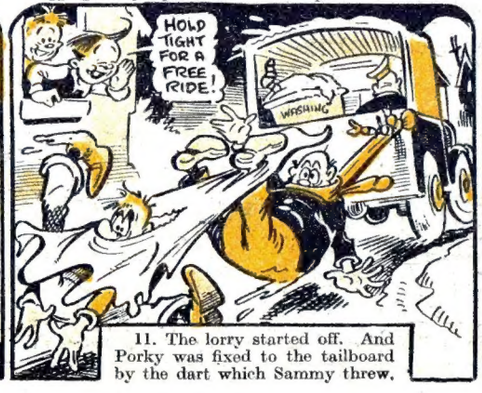
8. But while they were handing over all the good things, Porky outside was togging Salty up to look like a spook.



9. For they were after the feed. But when Salty rushed to do his stuff, Porky tripped up.



10. His tootsie got caught in a hole in the sheet. Then the mates started a fierce tug-of-war until—



11. The lorry started off. And Porky was fixed to the tailboard by the dart which Sammy threw.

12. Both mates were whizzed away, and our heroes began to enjoy the Christmas party!

ROVER JOE

Our range roamer's Xmas brings him unexpected thrills!

Christmas Eve Hold-up.

A CRISP white carpet covered the trail and powdery snowflakes whirled and scurried in the biting wind, but there was a contented, care-free grin on Rover Joe's weather-toughened features as he sat slumped in the saddle, softly humming a cowboy carol. Sleepy, his battle-scarred old grey, jogged along at a leisurely trot, apparently unperturbed by the icy conditions, the reins hanging loosely about his snow-flecked neck.

It was Christmas Eve and the stocky little range roamer was going to spend the festive season with an old pard, Ted Winters, and his family at their lonely ranch deep in the wild, wind-swept cattle country.

Soon Joe spied a wisp of grey smoke ahead, curling lazily upward from beyond a belt of tall pines looking like a forest of giant, tinsel-decorated Christmas-trees. The little Westerner's grin broadened. They were nearing the end of their long journey.

When Joe reined in before the Winters' ranch a pleasant little woman ran out to welcome him.

"I'm so glad you're here," said Mrs. Winters. "But you must be cold. Come along in. There's a roaring fire and——" She broke off as she saw the little man glance round at his passive old grey. "Oh, of course, we mustn't forget Sleepy, must we?"

The trusty old grey was soon made comfortable in a large, warm barn, and Joe followed Mrs. Winters into the pleasant, timbered sitting-room, gaily decorated with evergreens and Christmas garlands.

"Gee, that's better!" Joe grinned, warming his roughened hands before the blazing log-fire. "It's mighty kinda you and ole Ted to ask me down here to spend Christmas wi' yo' all and——. Say, where is my ole pard?"

"Ted won't be long," the little woman explained. "Early this morning he took the buggy and drove off into Pine Creek to call at the bank for some cash and to collect a few presents and some tasty titbits for our Christmas feast to-morrow. He ought to be back by now, for Judy—that's our old buggy mare—won't worry about a few inches of snow on the trail. Won't Ted be pleased to see you? Hark! That sounds like him now."

Joe, too, had heard the soft clop-clop of approaching hoofs and the whinny of a horse outside. And, with his eyes lighting up with delight at thoughts of meeting his old friend, he joined Mrs. Winters as she hurried to the snow-covered front porch.

A moment later the rancher's wife uttered a cry of fear.

The little wanderer ran forward, and the smile suddenly faded from his eyes as he saw a big chestnut mare, her eyes wild, her nostrils distended, little flecks of foam at the corners of her jaws, and her traces dangling in the snow.

"It's Judy!" cried Mrs. Winters anxiously. "But—but where's the buggy—and Ted?" She swung round and looked appealingly at Joe. "Something's happened to Ted," she exclaimed, a note of fear in her voice. "Something dreadful—I know it."

The little Westerner quickly examined the sweating, panting mare. He lifted the dangling traces and noticed instantly that they had been slashed through. His keen eyes narrowed grimly and his lips thinned resolutely.

"Guess yo're right about something happenin' to Ted," he gritted, "but don't yo' worry, Mrs. Winters. I'll get cracking right away and see what's delayin' m' ole pard!"

Without another word he went racing across to the barn where Sleepy was stabled, and a couple of minutes later the old grey was hitting the trail to Pine Creek. And Joe's wizened countenance was grim and set as he crouched over Sleepy's neck.

The trail led across a wild, snowy waste and then wound up through a belt of tall white-capped pines. Suddenly Sleepy's ears went back and the old grey uttered a warning cry. Joe tensed; he sat bolt upright in the saddle.

At a bend ahead a four-wheeled buggy was lying overturned in a snow-drift beside the trail, while a tall, fur-wrapped figure was vainly struggling to right it. Urging Sleepy towards the scene, Joe recognised the man. It was his old buddy, Ted Winters.

"Hey, Ted!" he called. "Howdy, ole pard?"

The tall, grim-faced rancher swung round and his lined, anxious expression suddenly changed at sight of the cheery little range roamer.

"Why, Joe!" cried Ted, gripping his old pal's fist. "I shure am pleased to see you. Looky what a coupla pesky gophers did to me!"

In a moment Joe was listening to the rancher's story. He told how he was driving back from Pine Creek when two masked men had held him up.

"The coyotes turned th' old buggy into that thyar snow-drift," Ted explained in a voice tinged with anger. "They frisked me o' my money and a lot of the Christmas stuff on the buggy—guess they didn't want the kids' toys, so they slung 'em into the snow. When they'd gotten all they wanted they rode off an' left me here, stranded."

"Gee, pard, that's bad!" Joe broke in, his expression hardening. "The rats! But p'r'aps it's as well they cut Judy's traces. Y'see, the ole mare raced home an' I guess that's why I'm here. Say, pard, how long since those gophers hit th' trail?"

"'Bout ten minutes, I'd say," came Ted's reply. "But it ain't much use——"

"Ten minutes, eh?" Joe echoed. His eyes suddenly lit up and he leapt back into the saddle. "Suits me. Stay here, Ted, ole-timer, an' look after the buggy. I won't be long!"

A moment later, with little clouds of snow flying from his hoofs, Sleepy cantered off down the pine-lined trail. The men who had waylaid Ted Winters had a good lead, but Rover Joe was determined to track them down if that was humanly possible.

"Thanks for the Buggy Ride!"

IT was a fairly simple matter for Joe to follow the tracks, for the trail was only a minor one and seldom used, and this fact helped the little Westerner. The two crooks, obviously confident that there was little chance of pursuit, were jogging leisurely along a winding stretch of open trail when Joe sighted them two hundred yards ahead.

Suddenly one of the men, neither of whom was now masked, flung a glance back over his shoulder. The tensed, resolute crouch of the little rider bearing down on them must have roused their suspicions.

In a flash one of them whipped out a gun. There came a flash and a bullet kicked up a little shower of snow a yard ahead of Sleepy's plunging hoofs. Another bullet whistled past Joe's left ear.

With lightning speed the grim little range tramp hit upon a desperate plan. Craning low over Sleepy's neck, he whispered a few quick words in the wise old grey's ear. Next moment, even as another wildly aimed bullet buzzed high over his head, Joe suddenly flung up his arms, reeled sideways in the saddle as though he had been hit, and then went hurtling from Sleepy's back to plough a furrow in the deep snow.

There was a triumphant whoop from the two hold-up men as they slowed. But Sleepy's pace did not alter. His master had given him an order and the wise old grey went racing on, riderless.

Rover Joe, quite uninjured and merely foxing, raised his head as he lay full length on the snowy trail and peered ahead.

"Go it, Sleepy!" he muttered. "Gee, what a hoss an'—what a scrapper!"

Joe chuckled as he saw his old grey go plunging between the two riders. Suddenly Sleepy swung sideways and at full gallop collided heavily with the horse whose rider was holding the smoking gun. The horse was flung out of its stride and, stumbling in the deep snow beside the trail, flung its rider over its neck and then rolled over in a heap.

The grey went racing on, riderless. "Go it, Sleepy!" muttered Joe

But Sleepy wasn't finished yet. His big-hearted little master had told him to stop the two men, and with almost human understanding he was doing his best to carry out orders.

The second man took a sudden fright and spurred his colt into a gallop. But Sleepy was on him in a flash. Leaping forward, the old grey lashed out with his forelegs. The colt swerved away out of range of those flying hoofs, but Sleepy suddenly slithered to a stop and, jerking forward, gripped the colt's rider between his powerful teeth.

And the plucky old grey was still standing shaking the struggling, shouting man when Rover Joe, his face creased in a perky grin, came hurrying to the scene.

"Drop him, ole-timer!" the little tramp called. And Sleepy dropped his victim slap into a snowdrift!

Joe swung round to see what was happening to the other crook. He was only just in time. The fellow had scrambled up on hands and knees, and as he jerked upright his gun flashed once more into his hand.

Joe had only split seconds in which to take action. Whipping up a handful of snow, he squeezed it into a hard ball and with almost the same movement flung it with unerring aim full at the crouching crook.

Squelch! It struck the man full between the eyes and sent him sprawling backwards into the snow.

Next moment the little range roamer, still chuckling grimly, took a flying leap at the fellow. He snatched away his gun and flung it far into the trees beyond the churned-up trail, ere he jerked the scared and protesting man to his feet.

"Say, cut out the whining, gopher!" Joe rapped, a steely glint in his eyes now. "Guess yo've asked for a whole heap more than you've got comin' to yo', an'——"

Joe broke off, pivoted sharply on his heel, and then he burst out laughing. For standing behind him was Sleepy, and in his strong jaws he was holding the second tough, whom he had dragged out of the snowdrift.

"Good work, Sleepy!" he chuckled. "This shure looks like the last round-up!"

Joe quickly frisked the men and took charge of all the money and presents they had stolen from Ted Winters. Next he whipped his lariat from Sleepy's bridle and, making a double nose, slipped one loop around each of the cowed ruffians.

"Now, yo' coyotes, guess yo're gonna put right some o' the damage yo've done," he drawled menacingly. "Come on—an' look lively!"

Ten minutes later Ted Winters, jumping around to keep himself warm, was amazed to see his old pard Rover Joe riding towards him, and stumbling along behind Sleepy, roped together by the lariat, were the two men who had waylaid him. No wonder he stood and roared with laughter at the sight.

"Howdy, Ted?" cried Joe, reining in. "Guess we shan't be long now. Reckon we'll teach these gophers to mind their own bus'ness in future."

He leapt down into the snow and gave the sullen, sour-faced young bandits orders to haul the overturned buggy out of the snowdrift. And they were too scared of the stocky, steely eyed little Westerner and his almost human grey to utter a word of protest.

Urged on by fear of what might happen to them if they failed, the two men sweated and strained until the buggy was standing upright again on the snowy trail.

"Gee, Joe, those gophers have never worked so hard before!" Ted Winters remarked, with a broad smile. "But it don't seem fair to make yore ole hoss tow us back to the ranch after all he's done."

"Reckon he ain't gonna do no such thing, pard," Joe replied, and there was a whimsical glint in his eyes as he glanced at the two exhausted, perspiring crooks.

Dusk was beginning to throw long shadows across the snowy wastes in front of the Winters' ranch when a cheery whooping from away down the trail brought a crowd running to the porch. They were the neighbours and friends from the near-by ranches who had been invited to join Ted and his family for a Christmas celebration.

What a surprising sight met their astonished gaze! Approaching them was the old buggy with Ted Winters on the driving seat and Rover Joe, astride Sleepy, jogging along behind. But there was no horse between the shafts. Instead, the buggy was being drawn by two panting men.

Right up to the ranch they staggered, then Joe leaped down from the old grey's saddle.

"Merry Christmas, folks!" he whooped. Then he released the two toughs and pointed down the trail.

"Yo' two gophers had better make yoreselves scarce!" he gritted. "Go on!" And to help them on their way he planted a snowy boot behind each of them, which sent them staggering and stumbling in the snow.

(Meet Joe again in our next number, on sale Friday, January 5th.)

HALLO, CUTLETS!

Here's your old and trusted friend, the Editor, wishing you one and all a Merry Christmas and all you wish yourselves in the New Year.

I am sure that this grand Christmas Number will add greatly to your enjoyment during the festive season. Share it with the rest of the family, and your chums as well, for it is impossible to supply everybody with a copy who wants one.

That reminds me to remind you that readers having difficulty in obtaining regular copies of COMIC CUTS are advised to place an order with their newsagents immediately.

Again, every good wish!

Your sincere friend,

CLARENCE CUTS.

Diner: "I say, waiter, this turkey is only half cooked."

Waiter: "Then eat the half that is cooked, sir!"

A strange and baffling Xmas mystery, solved by—

THE GIPSY FIDDLER!

The Christmas Ball.

IT was just after tea-time on Christmas Eve. Kenton Steel, the famous detective, was seated in his consulting-room, enjoying a cigarette.

All suddenly the silence was broken as the phone bell rang. With a little grunt, Steel got up and crossed to the instrument.

"Just my luck to get a client on Christmas Eve!" he muttered as he picked up the receiver.

But the slight frown that had clouded his brow quickly evaporated when he learned that the speaker at the other end was an old friend. Steel's smile swiftly returned to his face when he heard the reason for the phone call.

His friend, Terry Lambert, was anxious to know if Steel had made any arrangements for spending Christmas. The detective assured him that he had not done so.

"Oh, splendid!" cried Lambert. "I'm delighted to hear that!"

"D'you mean you're glad to think of me spending Christmas in my consulting-room, twiddling my thumbs?" said Steel humorously.

"Gosh, no!" was the retort. "What I mean is that I'm glad you're not fixed up with anybody else. What about spending Christmas with us? The wife and I would be delighted to have you."

"That's very nice of you, Terry," said Steel cheerily. "I accept your kind offer with the greatest of pleasure."

"Nice work!" chuckled Lambert. "Can you come along right away? We're going out this evening to a Christmas Eve dance. Leaving home about eight. So if you could join us before then we could all go together."

"All right," agreed Steel. "I've nothing to keep me here. I'll pack a few things and come along right away. See you about sevenish."

"O.K., and we'll do our best to give you a good time," replied Lambert. "Cheeri-ho till later!"

He rang off, and Steel set about packing a bag with a few things he would need for his brief stay. He included full evening dress, in view of the dance that evening.

Terry Lambert and his charming wife greeted Steel warmly when he arrived at their home in the suburbs. They had a very nice house, for Terry was a successful business man.

Steel was introduced to their niece, Miriam Dale, who was also staying with them for Christmas. She was an exceedingly pretty and vivacious girl in the early twenties.

"Miriam's in the Wrens," explained Terry, "but she's been lucky to click for Christmas leave."

"And I am looking forward to the dance to-night," the girl chimed in. "I love dancing!"

Round about eight o'clock the party of four set off for the hall where the dance was to take place. Miriam Dale looked even more attractive than ever in evening dress, and her head of dark curly hair was adorned by an ornament which caught Steel's eye and admiration.

"That's a very pretty hair ornament you're wearing, Miss Dale," he told her.

"Yes, it belonged to my mother," the girl replied. "They're real diamonds, and it's quite valuable."

"Mind you take care of it, then," the detective advised her with a smile.

"I'll do that," she assured him. "I should never forgive myself if I lost it. But it'll be quite safe."

The hall was reached, and the dance was already in progress, though not yet fully warmed up. However, with more people constantly arriving, it was not very long before the revels were in full swing.

Music was provided by an orchestra of five, garbed in fancy gipsy costume. They were on a small platform in the centre of one side of the big hall.

Two of them were violinists. Whilst one seemed to be in charge and conducted the orchestra, the other made announcements from time to time. He spoke with a foreign accent, either real or assumed.

It was shortly after nine o'clock, at the conclusion of a dance, that he made one of these announcements.

"Ladies and gentlemens," he said, his voice booming through the hall, thanks to the microphone he used. "I have mooch pleasure in announcing that the next dance will be a Balloon Waltz."

Judging by their expressions, the dancers were mystified as to what was intended. However, the orchestra struck up a waltz, and the violinist who had made the announcement stepped down off the platform and wormed his way between the couples, playing the while.

Suddenly there was a little shout, which was quickly taken up until the hall resounded. It was due to the fact that a huge bunch of coloured balloons dangling from the ceiling had been let loose!

Pandemonium broke out instantly. The waltz was forgotten as everybody pushed and jostled in the highest good humour, anxious to get one of the slowly descending, gaily coloured air-balloons.

Steel managed to grab a blue one, which he presented to Miriam Dale with whom he was dancing. Soon all the balloons had found owners and the waltz was resumed, accompanied by numerous and frequent explosions as one after another the balloons were burst.

"Oh, that was really good fun!" said Miriam Dale, a trifle breathlessly, as the waltz came to an end. "I shall be glad to sit down for a while."

Steel escorted her to a chair at the side of the hall and stood beside her. They chatted for a few moments, till they were interrupted by an exclamation from a stoutish, middle-aged woman sitting near.

"My gold bracelet!" she said loudly. "I've lost it!"

Steel focused his gaze on the speaker at once. The woman was staring in dismay at a plump arm from which the bracelet had disappeared.

Her consternation was shared by her partner and two or three other people near. They started searching, and seeing that something was amiss the gipsy violinist came up and inquired what was wrong.

On learning about the missing bracelet, he mounted the orchestra platform, called for silence, and then announced the loss through the microphone.

"Will anyone who finds a gold bracelet please hand it in here?" he told everybody.

The dance went on, and Steel was content to sit it out, glad of a rest. He noticed that the stout lady also was not dancing. She was far too perturbed about her missing bracelet for that.

Time passed, but nobody had handed it in as requested. In addition, two other ladies reported in Steel's hearing that they had lost some article of jewellery or other.

Both losses were announced in the same way and by the same violinist. And the dancing went on, with eventually another balloon waltz, by request, it was stated.

It certainly caused the usual amount of robust fun in the struggling to get one of the descending balloons. Again the gipsy fiddler went in and out of the crowd, playing as best he could amidst the jostling he encountered.

And shortly afterwards two more losses—a brooch and necklace, were reported. It is not unusual for dancers to lose trinkets, of course.

But, all the same, Kenton Steel was beginning to think. Though he danced frequently, he kept his eyes open all the while. For though several losses had been reported, not one of the missing articles had yet been picked up and handed in.

The Last Waltz.

THE hour was getting late and the dance was drawing to a close. The last waltz was announced, and as the music started the lights were slowly dimmed.

Steel forced the violin across one knee, snapping it in half.

The violinist strode off the platform, swaying to his playing. Then a loud, long-drawn "O-o-o-oh!" was heard, and everybody looked up in admiration as from the ceiling fluttered a shower of multi-coloured confetti, with coloured beams of light playing on it from the four corners of the hall.

Steel, dancing with Mrs. Lambert, looked up in admiration like everyone else. But only for a few seconds. Down came his gaze again, and it fastened on the gipsy fiddler not far away.

The man was passing Miriam Dale, who was dancing with an R.A.F. officer, their faces upturned like nearly everybody else.

And the watchful Steel saw something that only his eagle eye noticed. The diamond ornament in Miriam Dale's hair was there, glittering brightly one moment. Next, it had vanished.

A hand had snatched it with a lightning-like movement. Steel's face set grimly, and, excusing himself to his partner, he led her to a seat.

"Sorry to desert you like this," he said quickly, "but I've a sudden job of work to do—professional work."

With that he hurried away, working through the throng of dancers, now waltzing in the thick of the confetti shower. The gipsy fiddler was working his way back to the platform when a hand suddenly fell on his shoulder.

He gasped, ceased playing, and swung round, to find a pair of steely eyes boring into his.

"Just a moment, please," said Steel quietly. "I want you to come this way."

"But—but what is this?" protested the other. "I—I don't understand. We have not finished yet. I must play——"

"The others can get on quite all right without you for a bit," broke in Steel. "Come on!"

His grasp tightened, and he urged the gipsy through the crowd of dancers, some of whom turned to stare inquiringly, though nobody suspected who Kenton Steel was or what was his motive.

Reaching a door at the end of the hall, Kenton Steel beckoned to one of the stewards, who followed the detective and the fiddler into a private room.

"Is anything wrong?" asked the steward, gazing from one to the other.

"Has any of the missing jewellery been returned yet?" the detective inquired.

"No, nothing at all," the steward replied. "It is most unfortunate, and has spoilt the evening for some people, I'm afraid. I really can't understand it. Of course, it is easy enough for a bracelet to drop off or a brooch to come unfastened. But what I can't understand is why not a single thing has been picked up and returned."

"Possibly because it was picked up by someone who had no intention of returning it," commented Steel.

"But—but what has all this to do with me?" cried the violinist. "Why have you brought me here?"

"For one thing, to return the hair ornament I saw you remove from one of the dancers who happens to be one of my party," said Steel bluntly.

The gipsy staggered.

"You—you saw me——" he began.

"Yes, and it's useless for you to deny it," Steel broke in. "I was watching you. Where's that ornament?"

"I—I haven't got it!" stammered the gipsy. "I know nothing about it. You're making a big mistake. You—you can search me if you like."

"I'll accept that offer for a start?" snapped Steel.

He proceeded to search the man in a manner that showed he was an expert. But, all the same, Steel found nothing. He was baffled, yet he did not show it.

"You see," cried the gipsy when the search was finished. "You were wrong. I think you owe me an apology. You stopped me from playing and brought me here, and——"

But before he could say any more, Steel, with a quick movement, snatched the violin which the gipsy had held above his head while being searched.

"Here, what are you doing?" the man screeched. "Give me that!"

Steel took no notice, however, and as the gipsy tried to snatch the violin back he elbowed him to one side, hurling him almost into the arms of the steward and another man who had come in.

"Hold him!" ordered the detective. "He may be a tough customer."

The gipsy certainly was that. He stormed and raved and tried to break away from the two men holding him. But in vain.

And Steel, having got the violin, shook it. From inside came a rattling sound, and when Steel peered into the interior he gave a grunt.

Grasping the violin, he forced it sharply across one bent knee, snapping it clean in half. A frenzied yell burst from the gipsy.

But Steel took no notice. Upturning one end of the fiddle, he poured out into his hand not only the stolen hair ornament, but the other missing articles as well.

"And now I see how he managed it," Steel said calmly, after examining the two portions of the broken violin. "There's a spring panel fitted into the back which self-closes. He helped himself to the things while attention was being distracted by the balloons and confetti. Now I'll phone the police!"

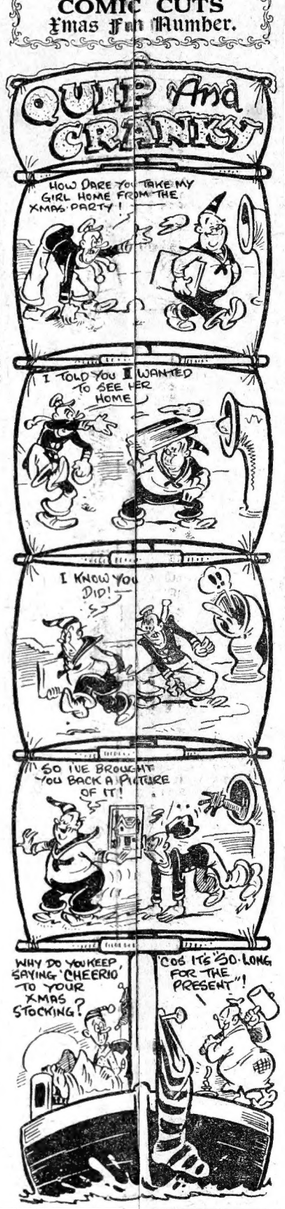
(Friday, January 5th, brings you another grand Kenton Steel story.)

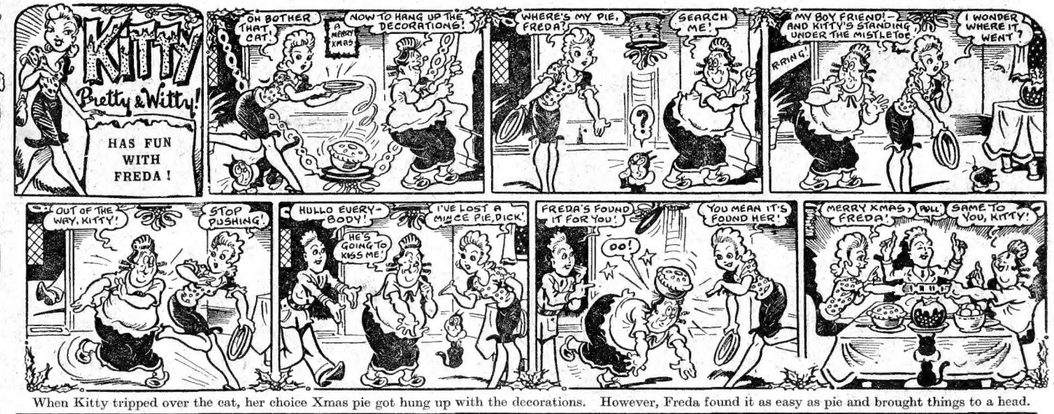
30-12-44

COMIC CUTS
Xmas Fun Number.

WADDLES THE WAITER
WINS A REAL XMAS BOX!
I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A NICE XMAS BOX, WADDLES!
BASHER
AH! HERE COMES THE XMAS BOX!
YOU CAN HAVE A XMAS BOX WITH ME IT WILL KEEP ME FIT!
I DON'T LIKE THIS!
COME ON! PUT 'EM UP!
OO! HE LOOKS FIERCE!
AH!
BASH!
TISHOO-O!
THAT'S FOR THE FOOD AND A TIP, WADDLES YOU'R TOO GOOD FOR ME!
TA!

After promising our waiter a Xmas Box, the prize fighter treated him to a sparring match. But after upsetting the pepper, he found Waddles was hot stuff.


QUIP And CRANKY
HOW DARE YOU TAKE MY GIRL HOME FROM THE XMAS PARTY!
I TOLD YOU I WANTED TO SEE HER HOME
I KNOW YOU DID!
SO I'VE BROUGHT YOU BACK A PICTURE OF IT!
WHY DO YOU KEEP SAYING 'CHEERIO' TO YOUR XMAS STOCKING?
COS IT'S SO LONG FOR THE PRESENT!



When Kitty tripped over the cat, her choice Xmas pie got hung up with the decorations. However, Freda found it as easy as pie and brought things to a head.

PLUM AND DUFF, THE BOYS OF THE BOLD BRIGADE!

THE COLONELS INVITED ME TO XMAS DINNER! I MUST DIG UP A FEW PARLOUR TRICKS TO AMUSE HIM WITH!
DETENTION
LET'S TRY MY MAGIC ON YOUR BAR OF CANDY! FIRST A FEW WAVES WITH MY MAGIC WAND!
AND HEY PRESTO IT DISAPPEARS!
CRACK!
VANISHING TRICKS, EH! COULD YOU MAKE THE KID DISAPPEAR, TOO?
I'LL HAVE A CUT AT IT, SIR! LET'S TRY THE OLD WAND ON HIM!
MUNCH
BY JOVE-IT'S WORKED! -HE'S VANISHED! YOU'RE A MARVEL, SUET!
I MUST HAVE A MAGIC TOUCH, SIR!
VERY CLEVER
COME ON INSIDE! YOU PROMISED TO HELP WITH THE DECORATIONS IN THE COLONEL'S DINING ROOM!
PUT THE GRUB ON THE TABLE, SUET AND LETS FEED!
TELL ME WHEN IT'S HIGH ENOUGH, CHUMMY!
A BIT HIGHER YET, PAL!
HEY! WHERE'S THE GRUB?
FUNNY! I HAD IT WHEN I CAME IN, SIR!
GR! I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR VANISHING TRICKS, MISTER MAGICIAN!
NOW WELL MAKE IT DISAPPEAR - FOR GOOD!
HOW TO MAKE THINGS COME BACK
BOOK OF MAGIC

1. Having been invited to Bogey's Xmas party, Suet thought he'd look up a few tricks to entertain the company. Then he spotted Plum.

2. Now Plum was holding a slab of chocolate, so Suet said he'd try to make it disappear. He did that right enough—and got away with it!

3. Jolly mean of him, wasn't it? Plum thought. Then up drifted Bogey, and he told Suet to show his skill by making Plum disappear.

4. "I'll do my best, sir!" wuffled Suet, and he gave a wag of his wand. Then—believe it or not—they found that Plum was no longer visible.

5. The reason being that Duff, inside, wanted him to give a hand hanging the Xmas decorations in old Bogey's room. "Come on!" he cried.

6. Our bold boys were getting nice and busy when Bogey told Suet to take the grub in. But Sergy didn't twig the dangling paper chain, so—

7. He walked right into it, just as Duff, up the ladder, gave his chain a tug. Up it went, and, of course, the tray loaded with grub went up, too!

8. In came Bogey looking forward to a fine feed. "Where's it gone?" he hooted, seeing Suet standing there like a stuffed onion in a pink fit!

9. Well, Suet couldn't explain that trick at all. And, greatly annoyed, Bogey chased him with snowballs, leaving our boys with the Xmas grub!

BIG BEN AND LITTLE LEN, THE LARKY LADS!

PA IS ON HIS WAY TO THE XMAS CLUB SHARE-OUT - WELL STICK TO HIM LIKE GLUE!
AS YOU ARE NON-MEMBERS YOU MUST WAIT OUTSIDE!
XMAS CLUB
SHARE OUT TO-DAY
THE REWARD OF THRIFT!
HE'S CLICKED!
SHARE OUT TO-DAY
XMAS CLUB
AH! MY CHANCE TO GIVE THEM THE SLIP!
WOW! HE'S BUNKING OFF WITH THE BAG O' CASH!
CASE O' DAYLIGHT BAG SNATCHING I THINK BOYS!
POLICE
HA! HA! THEY'VE GOT TO BE UP VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING TO CATCH THEIR OLD PA!
POLICE
THANKS OSSIFER - I'LL TAKE IT!
HAND OVER YOUR ILL GOTTEN GAINS!
ITS ALRIGHT PA - WE'VE GOT ENOUGH LEFT TO BAIL YOU OUT IN TIME FOR THE PARTY!

1. When Pa went to draw his Xmas Club share-out, the lads went with him. And they determined to stay with him to the bitter end.

2. Now Pa had his own ideas about that. When the club was reached he informed the lads that as they were not members they couldn't go inside.

3. So they remained outside in the snow, and watched Pa as he drew the doings. A nice little sum it was. Fairly made the lads' mouths water.

4. "We're sharing in that sharing out," said Ben. But he and Len turned to watch the antics of the toy boxers. So Pa saw the chance to slip.

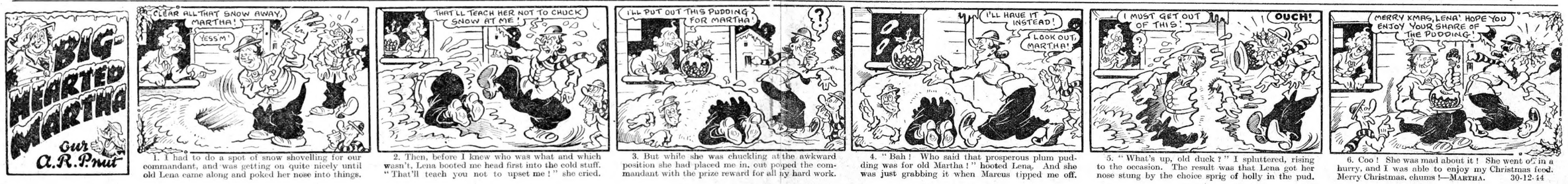
5. Accordingly he slipped. Yes, he galloped away in top gear, and had got quite a good start by the time the two lads realised his little game.

6. But were they to be diddled thusly? Nunno! Seeing the cops in the car, they went chasing after Pa. Then the fun commenced.

7. Yes, the cops thought that Pa was a tea-leaf doing a bunk with the loot. So after him they scorched with the lads piled on top of the car.

8. Pa had pulled up to light a gasper, thinking he was safe. But what a nasty shock he had when the cop suddenly did a pounce on his neck.

9. So Pa finished up behind iron bars, and the lads got his bag of cash. But they used some of it to bail him out, and all had a merry Xmas!


BIG-HEARTED MARTHA
Our A.R.P.nut
CLEAR ALL THAT SNOW AWAY, MARTHA!
YESS'M!
THAT'LL TEACH HER NOT TO CHUCK SNOW AT ME!
I'LL PUT OUT THIS PUDDING FOR MARTHA!
?
I'LL HAVE IT INSTEAD!
LOOK OUT, MARTHA!
I MUST GET OUT OF THIS!
OUCH!
MERRY XMAS, LENA! HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR SHARE OF THE PUDDING!

1. I had to do a spot of snow shovelling for our commandant, and was getting on quite nicely until old Lena came along and poked her nose into things.

2. Then, before I knew who was what and which wasn't, Lena booted me head first into the cold stuff. "That'll teach you not to upset me!" she cried.

3. But while she was chuckling at the awkward position she had placed me in, out popped the commandant with the prize reward for all my hard work.

4. "Bah! Who said that prosperous plum pudding was for old Martha!" hooted Lena. And she was just grabbing it when Marcus tipped me off.

5. "What's up, old duck?" I spluttered, rising to the occasion. The result was that Lena got her nose stung by the choice sprig of holly in the pud.

6. Coo! She was mad about it! She went off in a hurry, and I was able to enjoy my Christmas feed. Merry Christmas, chums!—MARTHA. 30-12-44

A thrilling story of a strange Christmas in Arctic seas.

GHOST SHIP!

The astounded Huns took one look at the guns and flung up their arms.

U-Boat's Prey!

CADET HARRY REEVE of the Merchant Navy hooked his leg over the tiller to steady it, and flapped his arms across his chest for warmth. In the small lifeboat with him were five others from their torpedoed ship, the "Sheldrake"—two seamen, two firemen and the cook, a big fair-haired Norwegian called Jake Jorgen.

The sails were furled because there was no breeze, and Harry was steering in roughly the direction he imagined Bear Island to be. By some mischance no compass was among the boat's equipment.

A white fog still enveloped these Arctic waters between North Cape and Bear Island, as when the stealthy attack had been made on the Sheldrake conveying medical supplies and clothing to Petsamo for the Russians. Ice-floes dotted the sea, and young Johnny Tranter, A.B., and one of the firemen named Tam Rogers, pulled on the oars more for the exercise than in the hope of getting to land. Another able seaman, old Bill Dowle, a fireman called Pug Judson, and cookie huddled under a tarpaulin for a measure of warmth.

The air was bitterly cold, and a single night in that open boat had been a grim experience. When the Germans had opened fire after the Sheldrake had been "bumped," the lifeboats had separated, and no one had raised a voice for fear of attracting attention.

Daylight far to the north of Norway only lasted for about four hours, and it was getting light at ten o'clock in the morning. Harry began humming to himself, and Johnny, plying his oar, raised his eyes.

"That reminds me of somethin'," he remarked.

"Christmas, maybe," said Harry.

Johnny nodded, and was about to answer when old Bill Dowle spoke:

"Many a year ago I used to sing 'While Shepherds Watched' when I went round the houses with the other kids in my road. Those were the days when there were bright lights in London, and a tanner would buy you a packet o' fish-an'-chips as big as your nob. Cor, I was forgettin'. To-day—Christmas Day! No drizzle, no mud. What you might call a proper white Christmas."

Jake peered from under the tarpaulin.

"Always we have da white Christmas in Norway," he sighed, "and always da beeg plum pooden. I t'ink next Christmas perhaps——"

"Here! Let's get this here one over first, cookie," wheezed Pug Judson. "You listen. I'll sing you a proper carol."

"Lumme! Have a heart, mate!" protested Tam Rogers.

"Well, I'll spin you a yarn to pass the time," suggested old Bill Dowle. "Christmas always reminds me o' spooks, and when I was a kid I used to like sitting in front o' a roarin' fire with me back hair all a-creep while someone told a spooky tale about the haunted grange. But the most remarkable ghost was a ship, the old 'Flyin' Dutchman,' manned by the shades o' buccaneers, what used to appear and disappear at sea and bring bad luck to any sailors who saw it. Well, once on a time, my grandfather, who was mate in the barque 'Stormaway,' was sailin' off South Georgia when——"

"Wait! Listen!" interrupted Harry.

A hush fell over the six men adrift in the open boat. Those under the tarpaulin sat up, and old Bill cupped an ear thinking that perhaps the young cadet had heard the faint hum of an aero-engine despite the foggy conditions. But the sound came in the form of an unrecognisable song rendered in a low, gruff voice.

"Queer—bloomin' queer," mumbled Pug with a shiver.

The rowers had paused on the oars, and Harry told them to pull slowly and quietly while he steered in what he imagined to be the direction of the singing.

Suddenly the eyes of all of them blinked in surprise at the vision that rose dimly before their gaze. A ship emerged through the white fog, a spectral form that seemed to have no substance—a ghost ship as unreal as the Flying Dutchman herself.

"By gosh! Don't you know her, chaps?" Harry whispered excitedly. "She's ours—the Sheldrake! Her masts are gone, or part of 'em rather, and she's down by the head. But she didn't sink after all. Someone's aboard her, too; there's work been done, and now we know where the singing came from."

Cookie opened his big mouth to give a hail, but Harry told him to keep quiet. Men were aboard the Sheldrake, which had stoutly remained afloat, for other voices came weirdly from across the ice-patched sea. But were they British shipmates from the other lifeboats, or had the German U-boat commander put a prize crew on board in an attempt to salve the vessel and her precious cargo?

The steamship was beam-on, and thicker mist hid her for a minute or two while the lifeboat crept closer. Then Harry and his mates saw a man in the bows, but he was not looking their way.

"Looks like the bloke has a telescope to his eye," said Johnny.

"A bottle to his mouth, you mean," muttered Tam.

The look-out slumped in a restful position beside a winch, and then a thick guttural voice came from somewhere amidships.

"Der Tag! Heil der Fuehrer!"

It was a toast to "the Day"—Christmas Day—and it was plain that Germans were celebrating with food and drink from the Sheldrake's stores. There was no sign of the U-boat, for Harry cruised carefully round the stern of the ship which was hove-to, and so it appeared that the prize crew of Huns would not consist of many men.

"What about boarding her, fellows?" Harry suggested. "Whatever the result, we might as well have a shot at seizing the ship—better, anyway, than this ghastly cold in an open boat. Either those Jerries hope to get the engines turning, or else the submarine is coming back. But there's the chance that the U-boat won't find her again if this fog doesn't lift."

"Aye, let's go aboard," agreed old Bill. "Anyway, we can't get in a worse 'jam' than we are now."

So Harry brought the lifeboat noiselessly under the Sheldrake's counter, and round to the starboard quarter where a Jacob's ladder was dangling over the side. They made fast with the painter and quietly climbed aboard, unexpected Christmas visitors for the Germans celebrating in an after saloon.

Christmas Party!

"I BANE feeling mooch stronger," grinned Jake Jorgen, after slowly stretching his muscular arms. "I t'ink I will take care of da look-out man, ya?"

"Go with him, Johnny," said Harry. "Grab the Jerry without any noise, and you other chaps come with me."

The look-out in the bows gave no trouble at all. The German was dopey with rum, and was more dopey still after the cook had crept up stealthily behind him and punched him under the left ear. Whereupon, Johnny stuffed a wad of oakum in the victim's mouth, and trussed him hand and foot with a heaving line in seamanlike manner.

Meantime, Harry and his party had found three rifles stacked at a hatchway and a tommy-gun with ample ammunition. Also, by peeping through a fanlight, they had found eleven more Germans in the ship's officers' saloon—ten U-boat marines under a bullet-headed young officer called Leutnant Flagge. They were waiting for their Christmas dinner, and occupying the time by opening bottles and drinking liberally from the Sheldrake's supplies.

Jake and Johnny came back to report success, and with material proof in the shape of a loaded Nordenfelt pistol.

"Okay, you fellows," whispered Harry. "It seems that these sausage-eating tripehounds intend to scoff the turkeys and plum puddings our skipper ordered to be put aboard for our comfort on Christmas Day. Well, all a Jerry would ever get from me at Christmas would be the prickles off the holly. So come this way, and tread lightly with your big flat feet, and we'll turn that merry gathering below into a party more to our liking."

He led the way down a companion ladder and the others followed quietly in their rubber seaboots. The door of the saloon was ajar and Harry peered in as a fresh chorus of "Heils!" rose from the German prize crew. A fat Bavarian from the U-boat, a cook wearing a white apron, was waddling in from an opposite door leading to the galley and bearing a dish with a huge steaming turkey on it!

Harry stepped forward.

"Ja, ja! Heil der Tag!" he exploded mockingly. "Stick up your paws, you thieving pigs, or you'll get a dose of lead pills for dinner."

The astounded Huns took one look at the guns pointed at them and flung their arms above their heads, even the Bavarian cook who dropped the dish with a crash to the deck. The only one who attempted to draw his revolver was Leutnant Flagge, but Harry floored him with a straight left between the eyes.

"Fine!" panted Harry. "Collect their guns, mates."

The Germans were disarmed; cookie hurried to pick up the turkey, and old Bill went off for oakum and ropes for trussing the prisoners.

"Schweinhunds! Pig-Englanders!" spluttered Leutnant Flagge as he staggered painfully to his feet. "Our gallant unterseeboot—ja, der U-boat—he vill come back and you vill pay mit your lives."

"Well, we'll have dinner first, old sport," grinned Johnny, rubbing his hands, "and you can have a helping o' 'wind pudden' apiece."

"Wind pudding" is the sailor's term for "air," and it was a poor substitute for turkey, as the gagged and bound Germans thought while they watched Harry and his shipmates fill themselves with the wonderful Christmas fare the Bavarian had prepared.

The prisoners, with the exception of this man, were relieved of their great-coats and caps, then escorted to a store aft and locked in. The Bavarian was released from his gag, but his wrists were kept tied, and Harry addressed him bluntly.

"You do what I tell you, Fritz," he said, "and you'll come to no harm. If you disobey you will be shot. We are desperate men and this happens to be our own ship. So if that pirate submarine of yours comes back you'll do the talking in the way I'll tell you, and don't try any tricks because I savvy the German lingo quite well and so does our Norwegian cookie."

"Ja, ja," sighed Fritz; "mit regrets I vill obey. It vould be sad for me to die on Christmas morning."

It was shortly before dusk when Pug Judson, who had been on watch, slithered below with the critical news that the U-boat was coming slowly through the mist and seemingly about to moor on the port side.

The armed pals lay low. They heard the submarine moor alongside and the captain hail the prize crew. Then, according to Harry's directions, the big Bavarian called thickly in German to say there was much good wine still on board. The commander and three other Germans came across and down the companion ladder—to receive the biggest Christmas surprise of their lives! For the British survivors had them covered in a moment, and sacks were drawn hurriedly over their heads to prevent any outcry.

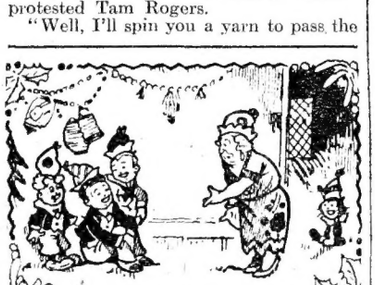
A junior officer, warmly wrapped, was keeping watch on the U-boat's conning-tower bridge in company with a signalman. Johnny and Jake, led by Harry, slithered across the Sheldrake's deck out of sight, and suddenly launched themselves upon the pair and overpowered them. Old Bill and Tam swung a heavy metal canister over the gunwale on to the conning-tower, and Harry called in German to the crew in the snug warmth below.

"Hear me, you Nazis! The Sheldrake has been recaptured by the British and you are prisoners-of-war. If any of you makes a hostile move, this depth-charge you see at the edge of the hatch will be dropped."

In what terror the trapped Huns remained for many hours may well be imagined; but the rest of Christmas was a nerve-racking time for Harry and his shipmates, too. But the fog cleared during the night, and next day a British cruiser hove in sight.

The Sheldrake and her valuable cargo were taken to Bear Island and later to Petsamo. The captured submarine crew were sent to England, and what riled them more than anything was that Harry's "depth-charge" was nothing more than an empty oildrum!

(Another thrilling war story in our next number, on sale Friday, January 5th. Don't miss it.)



Lady (who wants lad to leave Christmas party as it is getting very late): "Don't you think your mum and dad must miss you?"

Lad: "Oh, yes! Let's send for them, too!"

Pa: "Where are you taking my coat and hat?"

Tommy: "To the kitchen, dad. Ma is now going to dress the turkey for dinner!"

30-12-44

A Seasonable Side-splitter:

Getting the Bird!

The Two Prizes.

THERE was a very glum expression on the face of Timothy Trippe, sitting at the kitchen table in No. 22, Mulberry Terrace, where he resided with his better half.

For that lady had just returned from shopping and had placed on the table her various purchases. They included the weekly ration from the butcher's.

"Crumbs, is that all he's let you have—and Christmas week and all!" hooted Tim, surveying the small piece of meat. "Just a mouldy, moth-eaten bit of mutton?"

"It's twice what we usually get," replied Mrs. Trippe. "We're having double rations this week, as it's Christmas, you know."

"I know, but all the same, that doesn't look at all like a Christmas joint to me!" declared Tim. "Where's the jolly old turkey we used always to have at Christmas?"

"Ah, it's no good thinking about that now," sighed his wife. "We must be thankful for what we can get these days. I'd like to have a turkey every bit as much as you. Or a goose or even a chicken. But as it is——"

She sighed again, and even as she did so there came a sharp rat-tat at the front door.

"The postman!" cried Tim, and hurried to the front door.

On opening it, he found, not a postman, but a man well muffled up against the cold who pushed a parcel into Tim's hand.

"What's this?" asked Tim.

"This is No. 22, isn't it?" said the other.

"That's right," agreed Tim.

"Then it's for you," his visitor went on. "Good-day and a Merry Christmas."

He went off, and Tim returned to the kitchen, wondering what was in the parcel. He opened it, then both he and his wife gave whoops of delight.

"A chicken!" cried Tim. "Just what we want for Christmas! Who ever can have sent it? There's no note or message with it, and the chap who brought it didn't say who it was from."

"Well, why worry, so long as we have got it?" said Mrs. Trippe. "That's our Christmas dinner, anyway, and we needn't worry about that lump of mutton the butcher gave us."

"No fear!" tootled Tim. "Hang the chicken in the larder, dear."

His wife lost no time in doing this, and she and Tim congratulated themselves on this unexpected stroke of luck.

"Christmas is the day after to-morrow, and that bird will be all the better for hanging a couple of days," said Mrs. Trippe. "Perhaps between now and then we shall find out who sent it to us. It may have been my Aunt Maggie."

"I hope not," said Tim promptly. "If she sent it, she'll be rolling up in due course to help us eat it. I know her—and I know what that would mean, too. It would ruin our Christmas completely."

"She certainly is a bit of a tartar," agreed Mrs. Trippe.

However, the day passed without any sign of Aunt Maggie arriving. Nor did anything happen to explain the mystery of who had sent the chicken.

Next day Tim's next-door neighbour, Jerry Jooce, gave him a call.

"I want to ask you a favour, Tim," he said. "They're doing the draw for the Christmas raffle at the club this afternoon, and I shan't be able to attend the proceedings as I'd hoped. I wonder if you'd be good enough to collect any prize I may get in the draw. You'll be going along yourself, I suppose?"

"Sure thing!" tootled Tim. "I'm hoping that I click for a prize, too. I took five tickets."

"So did I," said Jerry Jooce, who was a large-sized man with a very genial nature. "Here they are."

He handed over five numbered tickets, and shortly afterwards took his departure. About an hour later Tim went along to the club to witness the draw.

"What—what's this supposed to be!" Tim heard Jerry splutter.

There was quite a crowd present, all noisy and jolly. Presently the proceedings commenced and the winning numbers were called out by one of the officials.

"First prize is won by No. 37!" he announced.

Tim hurriedly looked through the numbers of the tickets he held, and gasped.

"I say, that's me!" he sang out. "I've got 37!"

"Then the first prize is yours!" said the official. "Coming over!"

Amidst loud applause, he handed Tim a round hamper. The lid was firmly fastened, but protruding from it was the head of a turkey. So it was pretty evident that Tim had won a turkey.

"Well, that's a bit of luck," he said, as he took the hamper. "Perhaps I'll win another prize—you never know. I'd jolly well like to win that fountain-pen."

So he stayed while the draw proceeded. When the fountain-pen was reached, the winning number proved to be 84. And it was amongst the five that Jerry Jooce had taken and entrusted to Tim.

Tim sang out for it, and it was handed over. No more prizes came his way, but, very satisfied, he toddled off home with the hamper and Jerry's fountain-pen.

His wife was out finishing the shopping, so he dropped the hamper in the hall for the time being. Then he had a good look at the pen, which he admired very much.

"I wish I'd won this pen," he mumbled. "It's just what I want. And really we don't need that turkey as we've got the chicken. After all, a chicken's enough for just the two of us. A turkey lasts so long and hangs about till you get tired of the sight of it."

Then an idea shot into Tim's brain, and his peepers glistened.

"How would it be if I swopped over prizes?" he muttered. "After all, Jerry would really be getting the better of the deal. That turkey must be worth more than a fountain-pen, dear though they are nowadays. And if he found out afterwards that I'd given him the wrong prize—well, there'd be nothing he could do about it. Blow me if I don't give him the hamper and keep the pen!"

And, having thus decided, Tim picked up the hamper and carried it to the house next door. Jerry was in, and he was delighted when Tim handed him the hamper and informed him that he'd won the first prize.

"Well, that is a bit of luck!" gurgled Jerry. "I'm ever so much obliged to you, Tim. A turkey, eh? How did you get on?"

"Oh, I won a fountain-pen," replied Tim, blushing guiltily. "Cheerio, Jerry, and all the best for Christmas!"

Tim went off, and something prompted him to look in through the window of Jerry's sitting-room. He saw his stout neighbour carry the hamper into the room and place it on the table.

He cut the fastening and raised the lid. Then he grabbed the turkey's head and pulled it up. And as he did so, his eyes goggled and he gasped aloud.

For there was no turkey in the hamper at all. Tied to the head by a piece of string was a brick.

"What—what's this supposed to be?" Tim heard Jerry splutter.

Then, stifling his chortles, Tim hurried back home. His wife had come in, and Tim laughingly told her what had happened.

"Oh, corks!" he gurgled. "You ought to have seen the look on old Jooce's face when he saw what was in that hamper instead of the plump turkey he was expecting. And I'd have been landed with that if I hadn't swopped over the prizes. You see, my dear, I wanted a fountain-pen, and as we've got a chicken, we didn't need a turkey in any case."

"But we haven't got a chicken," retorted Mrs. Trippe. "That's where you've made a mistake."

"Haven't got a chicken?" snorted Tim. "What are you talking about? What about the one in the larder—the one that was delivered yesterday?"

"It's been collected," his wife explained. "A chap called this afternoon in a proper state. Said the chicken had been delivered here, 22, Mulberry Terrace, instead of 22, Mulberry Avenue round the corner. So of course, as there'd been a mistake and it was his bird, I had to hand it over."

Tim's face when he heard this was a study.

"Wow! That's done it!" he gasped. "Then all we've got for our Christmas dinner to-morrow is that mouldy hunk of mutton!"

"It's better than nothing," his wife replied. "Besides, you've got that fountain-pen, although it isn't really yours."

"But we can't eat a fountain-pen!" hooted Tim. "In any case, if I'd stuck to that idiotic first prize I won we'd be no better off. I don't know what the big idea was in making that practical joke a first prize. It wasn't fair, and there ought to be a row about it."

But at that moment there came a rat-tat at the front door. On opening it Tim gave a violent start and his knees quivered. For standing outside was Jerry Jooce with the hamper.

"What—what's the matter?" Tim spluttered. "Is—is anything wrong?"

"Not exactly," said Jerry, with a smile. "But there seems to have been a little bit of fun with this first prize I've won, which I would like to explain if I may come in."

"By all means," said Tim, and led the way into the sitting-room.

Then he waited with fast-beating heart, wondering what was coming now, and fearing the worst.

"You see this?" tootled Jerry, holding up the turkey head and brick attachment. "This is the first prize I won. And I must say it gave me a nasty jar when I saw it. I couldn't understand it at all."

"It—it certainly does seem a funny idea," stammered Tim.

"It's more like a booby prize than a first," Jerry went on. "However, on investigating, I found in the packing at the bottom of the hamper the real prize. Here it is."

He took out an envelope, from which he removed five one-pound notes and a printed card which entitled the holder to a dinner party for four at the Hotel Splendid on Christmas Day, everything paid.

"Not such a bad first prize, after all, is it, old man?" said Jerry.

Tim could not reply. Everything was swimming round him, and he felt like kicking himself now for having swopped over the prizes.

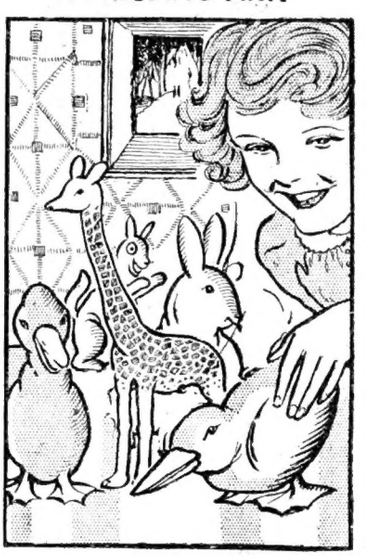
"The invitation is for four," Jerry went on. "So unless you're booked up, what about you and your missus joining me and mine and making the party? We'd both be delighted."

Tim and his wife were delighted, too, and they gratefully accepted the kind offer. All four had a tip-top Christmas together, and after they'd pulled the crackers, Tim eased his conscience by giving the fountain-pen to Jerry as a Christmas-box!

(Another merry yarn in our next number, on sale January 5th.) 30-12-44

The Ovaltineys' Own Column of Amusement

A MOUSE · AN EEL · A PIG
A COW · AN ELEPHANT
A NOAH'S ARK



More of these pictures to follow

IF you want to be a happy, healthy Ovaltiney you should do as all other Ovaltineys do—drink 'Ovaltine' regularly every day.

This delicious food beverage provides nourishment to build up robust health and to give you the energy and fitness which will help you to be successful in games and schoolwork.

'Ovaltine' also has the advantage of being naturally sweet so that there is no need to add sugar. Ask your mother to put 'Ovaltine' on her shopping list today.

OVALTINE
for Health, Strength & Energy

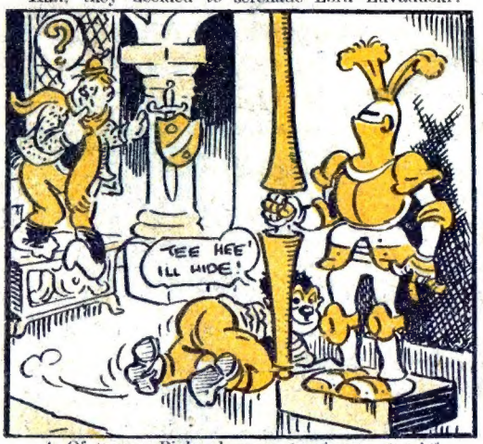
PINHEAD and PETE

THEY PLAY A SUCCESSFUL WAIT-ING GAME!

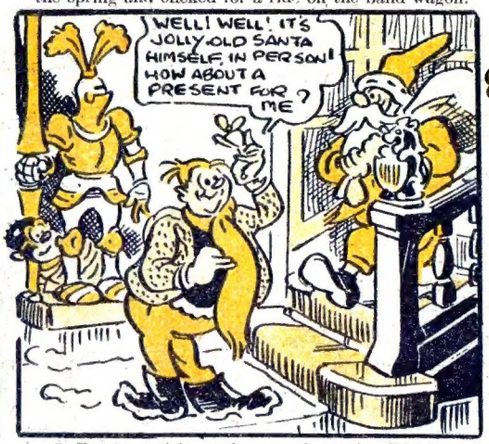
1. Our cheery chums were trying hard to raise the price of a Christmas feed by doing a spot of busking. So, when they came to ye olde Baronial Hall, they decided to serenade Lord Luvaduck!

2. "Wind up the music-box, coon, and let's get cracking!" cried Pinhead. But Pete was in such a hurry to get invited to the banquet that he busted the spring and clicked for a ride on the band wagon.

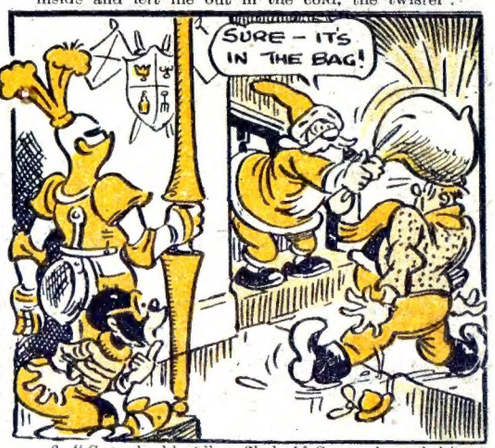
3. "Well, would you believe it!" hooted the big boy as he caught a fleeting glimpse of Pete worming his way in through the open window. "He's hopped inside and left me out in the cold, the twister!"



4. Of course, Pinhead was not going to stand for that, and quickly he scrambled in after him. "Where is he?" he bleated, for Pete had suddenly vanished.



5. But next tick, or the one after, who did he see flitting down the stairs but old Santa Claus in person. "Ah, ha! Any presents for me?" he tootled.

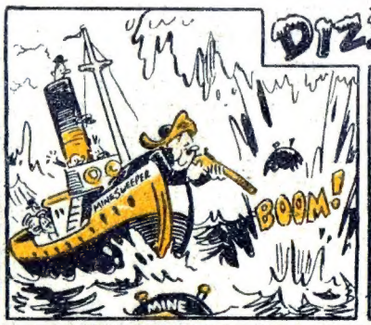


6. "Sure, buddy!" wuffled old Santa through his long whiskers. "This one is for you!" And he treated Pinhead to a striking present with his bag.

7. "Golly! So de old boy wants to play rough, does he?" cooed Pete from his hiding place, as he swung it across him with the pike. "Hold dat one!"

8. It was such a surprise packet that the old boy was fairly floored. And when his whiskers came off, our chums soon rumbled him as a bold bad burglar.

9. So, for capturing the bad lad and saving the family jewels, Lord Luvaduck invited our chums to stay and enjoy his Christmas party. Nice work!



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